

Forty-five years ago today, I got off a bus from camp at Union Square in New York City, handed my Dad my duffle bag, and with some other kids hopped on the subway out to Forest Hills in Queens for my third Bob Dylan concert and Bob Dylan's first concert (as opposed to a set at a folk festival) with a band. For the past six weeks, "Like A Rolling Stone" had been played constantly and way up the charts on the Top 40 AM radio stations. A couple of days before the show, there had been a strange interview with Dylan by Robert Shelton in the *New York Times*, where Dylan had talked about understanding green clocks and purple statues.

Lining up outside the stadium, we could hear the band sound checking, the guitars, drums and organ drifting in a muddled mass over the stadium walls. When *Highway 61 Revisited* came out a few days later, I realized one of the songs we'd heard was "It Takes A Lot To Laugh, It Takes A Train to Cry."

Inside the stadium, the stage was way out on the field, nowhere near the seats in the stands. As night fell, the air became cold, as if the stadium was a wind tunnel.

The first big difference from the two previous Dylan concerts I'd attended was several disc jockeys making introductions before the show began. At the other shows while there may have been a no smoking announcement, there was no introduction, Dylan would just walk out and start playing, "The Times They Are A-Changin'."

The first DJ to speak was Jerry White who had a nightly folk show on WJRZ and was the first person in the New York City area to play "Subterranean Homesick Blues" about five months earlier. He then introduced Murray the K, who had christened himself the Fifth Beatle, and White introduced him as such. For years Murray had presented rock and roll shows at the Brooklyn Paramount Theater and a couple of years later he would present the first show in the US by the Who, and if my memory serves the first show by Cream. He had his own way of talking often adding e-az into his words, so if he said say the word baby it would come out beazaby. Murray was massively booed immediately and when he said, "...it's not rock, it's not folk, it's a new thing called Dylan, adding that "Bobby is what's happening," it got worse. White trying to be a calming influence took the microphone and quickly said, "I suggest you give a warm welcome to Bob Dylan."

Shortly after that, Dylan appeared alone with his acoustic guitar and harmonica holder wearing a suit, his hair blowing wildly in the wind and began with "She Belongs To Me." During one of the harp breaks,

he walked to the side of the stage and posed for the crew of press photographers while playing.

Continuing with "To Ramona," "Gates of Eden" and "Love Minus Zero," he then said, "This is called "Desolation Row," and then launched into a cast of characters that had never been in a song before. It was in fact a song like no song before it. He sang with immaculate timing, the audience cracking up on lines like, "One hand is tied to the tight-rope walker, the other is in his pants." "Mr. Tambourine Man" closed the set.

Fifteen or so minutes later, White appeared again and introduced Gary Stevens the top disc jockey on WMCA. Stevens probably taking a cue from Murray the K's reception wasted little time in introducing Dylan.

Dylan appeared accompanied by four guys we found out days later were Robbie Robertson, Levon Helm, Al Kooper and Harvey Brooks and blasted into "Tombstone Blues" and pandemonium erupted, though the crowd quieted down by the third verse. However the tension was thick and the song's conclusion the reaction was clearly divided between applause and boos.

Dylan then started the most obvious song destined to be rocked up from *Another Side of Bob Dylan*, "I Don't Believe You," with the audience quiet during the song, but at the end the cheers and boos were again divided with a large portion of the crowd chanting, "We want Dylan." Dylan responded saying, "Aw! Come on," which was met by laughter, and went into "From A Buick Six." The boos were somewhat less and Dylan continued with "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues," the first song of the electric set to really hit me. But then during the next to last verse, a bunch of kids, all boys suddenly took off from the stands and ran across the field and up onto the stage, chased by cops, in and around the musicians. Nothing like this had ever happened at any concert I'd been to previously.

"Maggies' Farm" started to some applause but on the line "I try my best to be just like I am," the crowd erupted again in a wave of cheers and boos. Then to applause on the first line, Dylan began "It Ain't Me Babe," and at the first chorus half the audience started shouting along which they did on each chorus. It was appearing that Dylan was starting to win the crowd over, and a second wave of kids ran onto the stage again chased by the cops. Dylan put down his guitar and sat at piano - his first time playing it on-stage and went into "Ballad Of A Thin Man," though everyone thought it was called "Mr. Jones." The effect of hearing this song for the first time was beyond amazing, and

it seemed perfect for the tension filled atmosphere. "Like A Rolling Stone" which once again divided the crowd ended the show. There was no encore and we filed out somewhat dazed into the chilly August night, feeling like we had somehow narrowly evaded a riot.

A few days later walking down the main street of my town with my brother, looking at the window of the record store across the street, I said, "Hey, that looks like a new Dylan album. We crossed the street to check it out, and sure enough there was *Highway 61 Revisited*. Whatever we were going to do that day immediately ended. We took it home and found out the names of the new songs we'd heard a few nights before. Nothing would be the same again.